

Legalism and Modern Day Pharisees

“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Matthew 15:7-9.

Legalism is a manmade system of do’s and don’ts that appeals to the flesh because it is based on our carnal desires to be prideful and man-centered and not God-centered. Tobacco and alcohol prohibition are usually at the center of this deceptive attack from the Devil. Also, denial of certain clothing, music or anything which professed Christians deem wrong or against their manmade doctrines promote asceticism.

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances. (Touch not; taste not; handle not’ Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. Colossians 2:20-23.

To be sure there are dangers in worldly or immoderate use of anything. Alcohol is vilified especially.

Matthew Henry comments on this subject, “God doth allow a sober use of wine.” Was he deceived also? Christ commented on this topic too. “And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.” Luke 5:36-39. The bottles burst because they were fermenting. Then Christ said new wine should be put in new skins to preserve it. He also indicates that the old is better. Do you really want to rebuke our Saviour, when you see him, for teaching this? “For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.” Luke 7:33-35. Why did the Pharisees accuse Christ of being a winebibber if he was drinking only grape juice?

The “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel” Pharisees remind me of today’s fundamentalists that allow divorce and remarriage of church members but have a conniption fit when they light up a cigarette. But divorce is another topic. Get our tract on that subject. A good verse for Christian tobacco haters is Mark 7:15, “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.”

Ephesians 5:18 commands sobriety. “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit:” Amen, I hate drunkenness. At our church we dismiss members that are guilty of this and other sins. “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” I Corinthians 5:11-13. But when is says “excess” to describe this condition, that means it was real alcohol and too much was drunk.

This ruffles the feathers of some legalists but don’t you want the truth? That this is a fact is backed up by Acts 2:11-15. People accused the saints that were speaking in other tongues (get our tract on this subject also) of being full of wine. But Peter said they were not drunk seeing it was the 3rd hour of the day. (Nine o’clock our time.) Why didn’t Peter go into a Baptist soul winning speech like, “We are not drunk because the wine we drink is 99% grape juice.”

Another puzzler for pumped up people who like to satisfy the flesh is I Timothy 3:8, “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;” Now I suppose Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, was warning our fine deacons that too much grape juice would give them a tummy ache. But how about his warning them not to get drunk proving they drank real wine? Christians should allow the Bible to alter their beliefs, not their beliefs to alter the Bible. When you step outside the box and smell the fresh air of independent thought, it is a sense of freedom you will not forget. When you don’t have to worry about the one who butters your bread getting angry, it is also wonderful.

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” Romans 14:14. Fundamentalists cannot understand this verse. I couldn’t until I got out of the loop and started to ask God, “ what is truth”?